

Draft Environmental Assessment

Beavertail Hill State Park Campground Improvement Project



June 2009



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

Environmental Assessment MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to install campsite electrical pedestals at the 28 campsites at Beavertail Hill State Park.
2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:**
FWP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per 23-2-101 MCA.

State statute 23-1-110 MCA and ARM 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

Administrative Rule 12.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of users and the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the proposed project in relation to this rule.

3. **Estimated Schedule of Events:**
Public Comment Period: July 2009
Installation Commences: Fall 2009
Installation Complete: Fall 2009
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 10%
4. **Location affected by proposed action:**
Missoula County, T11N R16W Section 11. Beavertail Hill State Park is approximately 25 miles east of the Missoula, Montana, just south of Interstate Highway 90.



5. Approximate project size:

| | <u>Acres</u> | | <u>Acres</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
| (a) Developed: | | (d) Floodplain | <u>0</u> |
| Residential | <u>0</u> | | |
| Industrial | <u>0</u> | (e) Productive: | |
| | | Irrigated cropland | <u>0</u> |
| (b) Open Space/ | <u>3</u> | Dry cropland | <u>0</u> |
| Woodlands/Recreation | | Forestry | <u>0</u> |
| (c) Wetlands/Riparian | <u>0</u> | Rangeland | <u>0</u> |
| Areas | | Other | <u>0</u> |

6. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

State Electrical Permit secured by contractor.

(b) Funding:

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks | \$ 100,000 |
|--------------------------------|------------|

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Montana State Historic Preservation Office Cultural Resources

7. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Beavertail Hill State Park is located in western Montana, approximately 25 miles southeast of Missoula along Interstate 90. The 65-acre park was opened to the public in the late 1960s. Its convenient location along the Interstate 90 corridor and picturesque scenery next to the Clark Fork River has made this park a popular spot for local residents and nonresidents for many years for day-use and camping activities.

Beavertail Hill State Park provides visitors with a full range of facilities including: a hand-launch ramp, a campground loop with 28 campsites (which includes two tipis), an amphitheater, picnic area, and interpretive trail. The park's natural setting encompasses a mature cottonwood grove and an open grassland area at the northern end of the park. Fishing on the Clark Fork River is open for catch and release fishing year-round.

Over the past four years, this state park has received an average of 16,300 visitors annually. On average 35% of the park's visitors are nonresidents exiting from Interstate 90 for the camping opportunities. Although a formal customer satisfaction survey has yet to be completed at this park, anecdotal information from park staff and direct comments from campers reflect a general interest for an opportunity to use electrical pedestals at the campsites, especially since all new hard-sided camping vehicles are equipped to connect to electrical power.

Currently, the park has only one pedestal available at the campground, which is located at the campground host site and is in use throughout the summer season. The park does not currently offer an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant campsite. The proposed improvements would allow for the designation of an ADA campsite within the campground, in addition it would decrease camper reliance on individual generators that are sometimes in clash with the quiet

setting of the campground that can create user conflicts.

FWP experiences from previous campground electrification efforts have shown that some campers do appreciate the opportunity to use campsite pedestals instead of individual generators. Prior to 2007, there were no state parks in Montana providing campers the opportunity to utilize electricity for powering medical equipment, camper comforts, or recharging boating equipment. Feedback through visitor satisfaction surveys completed at the Cooney, Hell Creek, and Tongue River Reservoir State Parks, in addition to visitor comment cards, showed there was a contingent of campers that desired electricity within the campgrounds. Of the 110 visitor comment cards FWP received in 2005 at Hell Creek, 39 visitors asked if pedestals could be added to the park's facilities. The visitor survey completed at Tongue River Reservoir in 2007 reflected that 62% of respondents felt that electrical hookups at some of the campsites were important or very important. After the pedestals were installed at Cooney, Hell Creek, and Tongue River Reservoir State Parks, comment cards and comments given directly to park staff reflected that many campers appreciated the campground improvements and the opportunity to plug in instead of using their own generators. Now, those electrified sites have become the preferred sites for many visitors. This success is also expected to be seen at this state park.

Proposed Action Description

The design of the proposed electrification project will be such that all utility connections will be underground with only the pedestals at the campsite visible. This design will limit the intrusion of man-made objects to the natural environment of the park. The trenching of the conduits will require some disturbance of native vegetation and road crossings. Most of the conduits will be next to the existing gravel park roads where soils are already partially disturbed by vehicles and vegetative groundcover is limited. FWP is planning to prohibit trenching within 10-15 feet of mature cottonwood trees and conifers to limit potential impact to them. (See Part II for a more in-depth discussion of potential impacts.)

In addition to the actual conduits and pedestals, FWP anticipates there will be a need for the placement of a transformer box within the campground loop to upgrade the electrical infrastructure to required levels in order to support the pedestals. This electrical box will be concealed as best as possible.

8. Alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If FWP chooses not to improve the existing campsites with electrical pedestals, park staff will continue to receive requests from RVers and other hard-sided campers for such improvements in the future. Furthermore, if the campground is not improved to accommodate these types of campers, visitors may choose to recreate elsewhere.

Alternative B: Electrification of the 28 campsites – Preferred Action

The proposed enhancement to the campground at Beavertail Hill State Park with the electrification of 28 campsites would provide an additional service for camper comforts (e.g. medical equipment, kitchen appliances, TV, air conditioning, heater, etc.).

The availability of hookups throughout the park's campground will help to disperse campers evenly throughout the park and improve camper satisfaction and customer service. Furthermore, the new pedestals will reduce the need for visitors to rely on generators that might contribute to user conflicts.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to Alternative B, the preferred action. This is because under Alternative A, FWP would not pursue any of the proposed improvements, but the park staff would continue to provide routine maintenance to the current facilities and there would be no changes to the physical environment within the park.

3. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

| 1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure? | | X | | | | 1a |
| b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility? | | | X | | Yes | 1b |
| c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features? | | X | | | | 1c |
| d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake? | | X | | | | |
| e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard? | | X | | | | |

1a/c. No changes to the geologic substructure or modification to unique geologic features are expected because the conduit trenches are shallow in depth.

1b. The design of the proposed project will require the digging of trenches for all the infrastructure improvements, as well as, for the conduits connecting each of the pedestals to one another and to the electrical panel. The trenches are expected to be 24" in depth and approximately 10" in width to accommodate a 3" conduit and necessary fill material. After the installation of the conduits is complete, the disturbed soils will be replaced and compacted so that natural underbrush can be reestablished.

Within the project area the soil is Xerofluvents with a 0-2% slope (USGS Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey database, 3-31-09). Because of the nearly flat topography, no new erosion patterns are anticipated.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).) | | | X | | | 2a |
| b. Creation of objectionable odors? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally? | | X | | | | |
| d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants? | | X | | | | |
| e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.) | | N/A | | | | |

2a. Minor and temporary dust are expected to be created by the trenching equipment during installation process to connect electrical transformers with pedestal outlets.

With the completion of the proposed campground improvements, odors associated with generators is likely to decrease since campers are likely to choose to use electricity at the campsites instead their own generators.

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| 3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity? | | X | | | | |
| b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body? | | X | | | | |
| e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding? | | X | | | | |
| f. Changes in the quality of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation? | | X | | | | |
| j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality? | | X | | | | |
| k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity? | | X | | | | |
| l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.) | | N/A | | | | |
| m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.) | | N/A | | | | |

Although the state park lies within the 100-year floodplain (per FEMA Floodplain Map #30063C1875D), the proposed project will have no effect on surface water, drainage patterns, or floodwater routes. As previously noted, disturbed soils will be reseeded with native vegetation, which will decrease the likelihood of new drainage patterns becoming established.

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| 4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in? | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)? | | | X | | Yes | 4a |
| b. Alteration of a plant community? | | | X | | Yes | 4b |
| c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species? | | X | | | | 4c |
| d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land? | | X | | | | |
| e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds? | | | X | | Yes | 4e |
| f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland? | | N/A | | | | |

4a/b. The proposed construction and improvements will disturb small areas of vegetation as belowground conduits and infrastructure systems are established and connected. Areas that are disturbed by construction efforts will be reseeded with a native seed mix. The effects of these changes will constitute negligible changes to the diversity or abundance of the plant species in the area.

FWP's proposed project does not anticipate the need for the removal of any mature trees. To minimize potential trenching impacts to root systems, trenching will be prohibited within 10-15 feet of mature trees. FWP acknowledges there may be instances that electrical conduits may have to breach such a boundary because of existing utility systems, existing roads, or the needs of pedestal placement.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database did not find any plant species of concern within or in the vicinity of Beavertail Hill State Park.

4e. Currently, there are limited infestations of Dalmatian toadflax, spotted knapweed, hounds tongue, and leafy spurge within the campground. The installation of the pedestals may increase the possibility of noxious weeds becoming further established or spreading into new areas because of the soil disturbing activities, especially along the access roads. Reseeding disrupted soils after construction will limit the potential for additional weeds by providing competition from a mix of local native vegetation. Noxious weed control efforts will follow the guidelines presented in the FWP's 2008 Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan, which includes the use of herbicides and mechanical efforts.

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| ** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat? | | X | | | | |
| b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species? | | X | | | | 5b |
| c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species? | | X | | | | 5c |
| d. Introduction of new species into an area? | | X | | | | |
| e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals? | | X | | | | |
| f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species? | | X | | | | 5f |
| g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)? | | X | | | | |
| h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.) | | N/A | | | | |
| i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.) | | N/A | | | | |

5b/c. Some transient game and nongame species, such as mule deer, white-tailed deer, ground squirrels, game and non-game birds, and chipmunks will be affected by the noise generated by the proposed project for a limited time. These species will likely avoid the construction areas but will return to the area when the proposed project in the area is completed and noise levels returns to normal. (Ray Vinkey, FWP Wildlife Biologist, made this assessment)

5f. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database identified four sensitive species within and in close proximity to Beavertail Hill State Park. They are the bald eagle, keeled mountain snail, bull trout, and gray wolf.

There are currently two active bald eagle nests within the Park; one is north of the hand launch ramp and one south of the campground loop. Since both these nests are outside of the area in which the proposed activities will take place, FWP's Nongame Wildlife Biologist, Kristi DuBois, does not expect the installation of the conduits and pedestals will disturb the resident eagles or disrupt their normal activities.

The keeled mountain snail is endemic and restricted to the upper Clark Fork River drainage; however, the last known observation of an active group near Beavertail Hill is from 1975. Habitat occupied by keeled mountain snail includes low-elevation slopes of open juniper and Douglas-fir. Such habitat is not included within Beavertail Hill State Park; thusly it is unlikely this species would be impacted by the proposed action.

Bull trout are known to occupy portions of the Clark Fork River. Since the proposed electrification project will not influence the river or its shoreline, no impacts are expected to this species.

No gray wolves have been observed at the park, although they may pass through the area periodically (per Ray Vinkey).

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B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

| 6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Increases in existing noise levels? | | | X | | | 6a |
| b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels? | | X | | | | |
| c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property? | | X | | | | |
| d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation? | | X | | | | |

- 6a. There would be a temporary increase in noise levels at Beavertail Hill State Park due to the installation equipment and contracting staff working at the site. After the completion of the project, noise levels are expected to improve to below pre-installation levels since some campers who used to rely on individual generators will instead chose use of the pedestals for power.

The project is intended to begin during the fall in case the campground loop needs to be closed, which would limit inconveniences to most park visitors.

| 7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area? | | X | | | | |
| b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance? | | X | | | | |
| c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action? | | X | | | | |
| d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences? | | X | | | | |

The proposed project not will change the current use of the area.

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| 8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption? | | | X | | Yes | 8a |
| b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan? | | X | | | | |
| c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard? | | X | | | | |
| d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a) | | N/A | | | | |

- 8a. Chemical spraying is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds within the park, which is traditionally completed by a licensed contractor. The licensed professional would conduct weed treatment, and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures.

| 9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area? | | X | | | | |
| b. Alteration of the social structure of a community? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity? | | X | | | | 9d |
| e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods? | | X | | | | |

The proposed project will not affect local residents or traffic patterns in or around the park.

- 9d. There are seven known privately owned campgrounds offering electrical hookups within 30 miles of Beavertail Hill State Park, including those near Bearmouth, Drummond, and Missoula.

Chalet Bearmouth is 17-miles east of Beavertail Hill State Park. Like the Park, this campground is just off Interstate 90 and adjacent to the Clark Fork River. This campground offers 46 sites year-round with sewer and electrical hookups, tent camping area, showers, restrooms, laundry facilities, and restaurant. Rates are \$20 per night.

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The other six privately owned campgrounds are in or just outside of Missoula, which is 25-miles west of the state park along Interstate 90. First is the Elkstrom's Stage Station campground that is 5 miles west of Missoula and closest to Beavertail Hill State Park. This campground offers 37 campsites with electrical hookups in addition it 3 tipis and 21 tent camping sites. Elkstrom's facilities also include a restaurant, gift store, showers, playground, and laundry. Next is the Turah RV Park located 12-miles west of the Beavertail Hill State Park along the Clark Fork River. The rates at this RV Park are \$30 per night, which includes the following facilities: a restaurant, showers, water and electric hookups, laundry, and playground. Within Missoula, there is the 200-campsite Missoula KOA. This campground offers full hookups (water, sewer, and electric), cable TV hookups, wireless Internet service, swimming pool and hot tubs, restrooms, laundry, and a dump station. Overnight rates at the KOA are \$32 - \$63 per night. Also in Missoula is the Outpost Campground in Missoula. This 35-RV campground provides water and electrical hook ups, a grocery store, showers, laundry, and dump station for their customers at a rate of \$15 per night. Moving west of Missoula, is Jim & Mary's RV Park located 1-mile west of Missoula. This 52-campsite park provides customers with electrical and water hookups, restrooms, showers, laundry facilities, and wireless Internet service. The RV Park is open year-round and the overnight rate is \$30. Lastly, there is Jellystone RV Park that is just 8-miles west of Missoula. The RV park provides a full-service of amenities to their customers including: swimming pool, gift store, wireless Internet service, laundromat, showers, mini-golf source, and water, electrical, and sewer hookups. This large RV park (110 sites) charges \$38 per night for all hookups (water, sewer and electrical) and \$36 for campsites with just water and electric hookups.

If the proposed campground improvements are implemented, the aforementioned privately-owned campgrounds might be affected because campers may choose to stay at the state park rather than at the those campgrounds, because of the competitive overnight rate charged at the park.

University of Montana's Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research survey of traveler characteristics (based from April 2007) reflected a slightly higher percentage of the respondents stayed overnight in private campgrounds versus public ones when visiting Missoula Country.

If campers want a higher level of service or additional amenities, park staff will continue to refer those visitors to private campgrounds in the area.

Through the competitive bidding process for services, it is possible that a locally owned electrical business could be chosen for the project, which would support the local economy and residents of the area.

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| 10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: | | X | | | | |
| b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues? | | X | | | | |
| c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications? | | | X | | | 10c |
| d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source? | | | X | | | 10d |
| e. **Define projected revenue sources | | | | | | 10e |
| f. **Define projected maintenance costs. | | | | | | 10f |

10c. The proposed action will require the establishment of new underground electrical conduit lines between existing and possibly, new transformers in order to provide electricity to the new pedestals. Existing buried sewer and telephone lines are not going to be affected by the proposed new electrical conduits and panel.

10d. The proposed electrification of the campsites at Beavertail Hill State Park is expected to increase the park's consumption of electricity since most camping visitors at the electrified campsite are expected to be using hard-sided campers. Furthermore, the convenience of the pedestals will provide visitors the opportunity to use necessary medical equipment and recharge electronic equipment.

10e. If Alternative B (electrification) was completed, the park could expect an increase in revenue. The following chart shows the revenue estimates based on different levels of occupancy:

Total campsites = 28

Number of campsites proposed for electrification: All campsites (including the two campsites associated with the two tipis)

Season (2008): May, June, July, August, September = 153 days

* The season may be extended until the end of October beginning in 2009

On average occupancy rate at this state park is 33% over the entire season.

| Occupancy (#of days x # of campsites x camp fee with hook up) | | Less the Cost of the Electricity | Gross Revenue |
|--|---|----------------------------------|---------------|
| 33% | (153 days)(28 sites)(\$20/night) = \$28,274 | -\$ 5,655 | \$22,619 |

* Assume \$4 cost of electricity per site each night

10f. Maintenance costs of the electrical outlets (pedestals) will be minimal since they are designed to be self-contained. A licensed electrician hired by FWP will provide routine maintenance, if necessary, to guarantee the pedestals are safe for campers to use and are working properly.

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| ** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view? | | X | | | | |
| b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood? | | X | | | | 11b |
| c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.) | | X | | | | 11c |
| d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.) | | N/A | | | | |

11b. The anticipated design of the electrification project will have all electrical conduits underground and the transformer box covered with only the outlet pedestals visible. This design will ensure the natural beauty of the state park is maintained.

11c. The proposed improvement to Beavertail Hill State Park will not change the recreational opportunities at the park, only enhance the services provided for visitors. See *Appendix C* for Tourism Report.

The project is intended to begin during the late fall, in case the campground loop needs to be closed, which would limit inconveniences to most park visitors.

| 12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance? | X | | | | | 12a |
| b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values? | | X | | | | |
| c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area? | | X | | | | |
| d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.) | | N/A | | | | |

12a. FWP's Heritage Resources Program Manager will determine if a cultural resource survey is needed prior to the implementation of the proposed improvements and will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office as necessary. If any previously unrecorded cultural resource sites are discovered during construction, the Heritage Resource Program Manager will work with project engineers and the park manager to develop a project design that avoids further disturbance to these sites.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

| 13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.) | | X | | | | |
| b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur? | | X | | | | |
| c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan? | | X | | | | |
| d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed? | | X | | | | |
| e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created? | | X | | | | |
| f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.) | | N/A | | | | |
| g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required. | | N/A | | | | |

This EA found no significant impacts to the human or physical environment from the proposed action. The proposed project is expected to generate some interest from the owners of the privately owned campgrounds in the area, since they have expressed interest in FWP Park Division projects in the past.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Final plans and specifications for the project will be developed by the state-appointed engineering consultant in conjunction with FWP engineering staff. All state and federal permits will be obtained by FWP. A private contractor selected through the State's competitive bid process will complete construction. Final inspection will be the responsibility of the FWP Design and Construction Bureau.

State pesticide use laws and regulations will be followed. Application records will be submitted to the Montana Department of Agriculture as required every five-years and these records will be available to state investigators upon request.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed campground improvement project within Beavertail Hill State Park will meet the increasing needs of campers wanting to tap into electricity to power camping comforts, such as medical equipment, air conditioning, refrigerators, and TVs. The facility improvements to the park are expected to bring new visitors to the park and improve camper satisfaction and customer service to ensure returning visitors.

Because of the scope of the proposed improvements, it is expected there will be a limited number of impacts to the human and physical environment. However, most of these influences, which were previously noted, are expected to be only for the relatively short duration of the construction period with no lasting negative effects on the local environment. For those actions requiring minor mitigation, such as the trenching of the electrical system for the hookups and connections to the existing power source, efforts will be taken to reseed disturbed areas and efforts will be taken not to stress mature trees in the vicinity of the conduits. The reseeding of the affected areas will decrease the chance of noxious weeds being established and will limit erosion.

Additionally, the proposed project was reviewed and its anticipated impacts were compared with those noted in 23-1-110 MCA (ARM 12-8-601-608) to determine if the improvements proposed would significantly change park or fishing access site features or use patterns (i.e. construction of new roads, large excavations, above-ground utilities, shore alterations, etc.). It is the opinion of this reviewer; the proposed campground improvement project will not significantly alter Beavertail Hill State Park's physical features or alter user patterns within the park.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public Involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Legal notice in each of these newspapers: *Helena Independent Record*, *Seeley Swan Pathfinder*, and *The Missoulian*;
- One statewide press release;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>. (The EA will be posted under "Recent Public Notices.")
- If requested, FWP would conduct a public meeting on this proposal.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project. Copies will be available for public review at FWP Region 2 Headquarters.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few minor impacts and public support for the enhancements to the campground.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days following the publication of the legal notice in area newspapers. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on August 10, 2009 and can be mailed to the address below:

Beavertail Hill State Park Campground Improvement Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Or email comments to: Lee Bastian at lbastian@mt.gov or to Chris Lorentz at clorentz@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)? No
Explanation:

Based upon the above assessment (Part II) that identified a very limited number of minor impacts from the proposed action, which can be mitigated below significance, an EIS is not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

2. Persons responsible for preparing the EA:

Lee Bastian
Regional Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
406-542-5517

Mike Hathaway
Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
406-542-5513

Rebecca Cooper
MEPA Coordinator
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 E. 6th Ave., PO Box 200701, Helena MT 59620-0701
406-444-4756

3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Design & Construction Bureau

Legal Bureau

Parks Division

Wildlife Division

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

Montana State Historical Preservation Office

APPENDICES

A. Beavertail Hill State Park Map

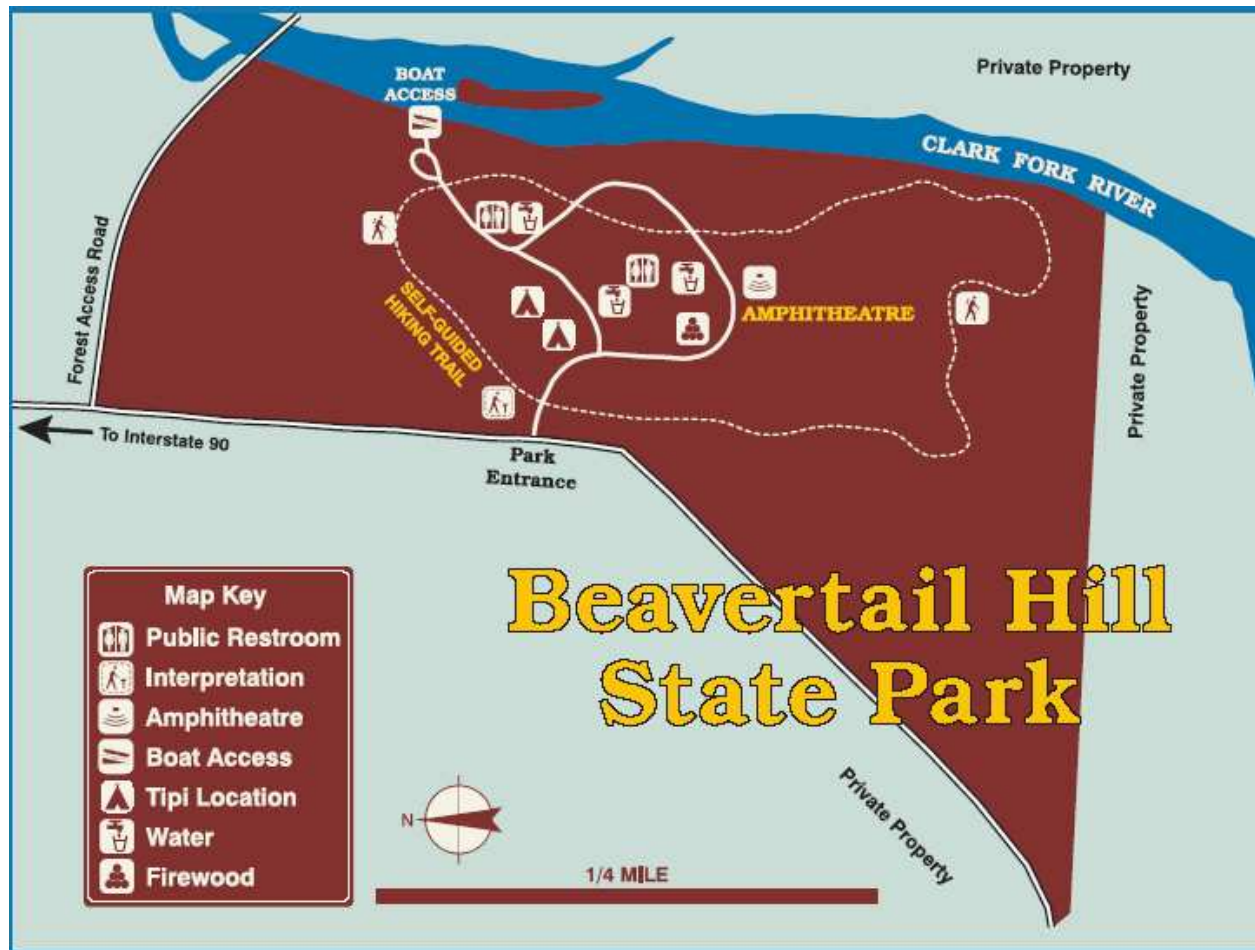
B. Concept Map for Proposed Action

C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce

D. HB495 Checklist

APPENDIX A

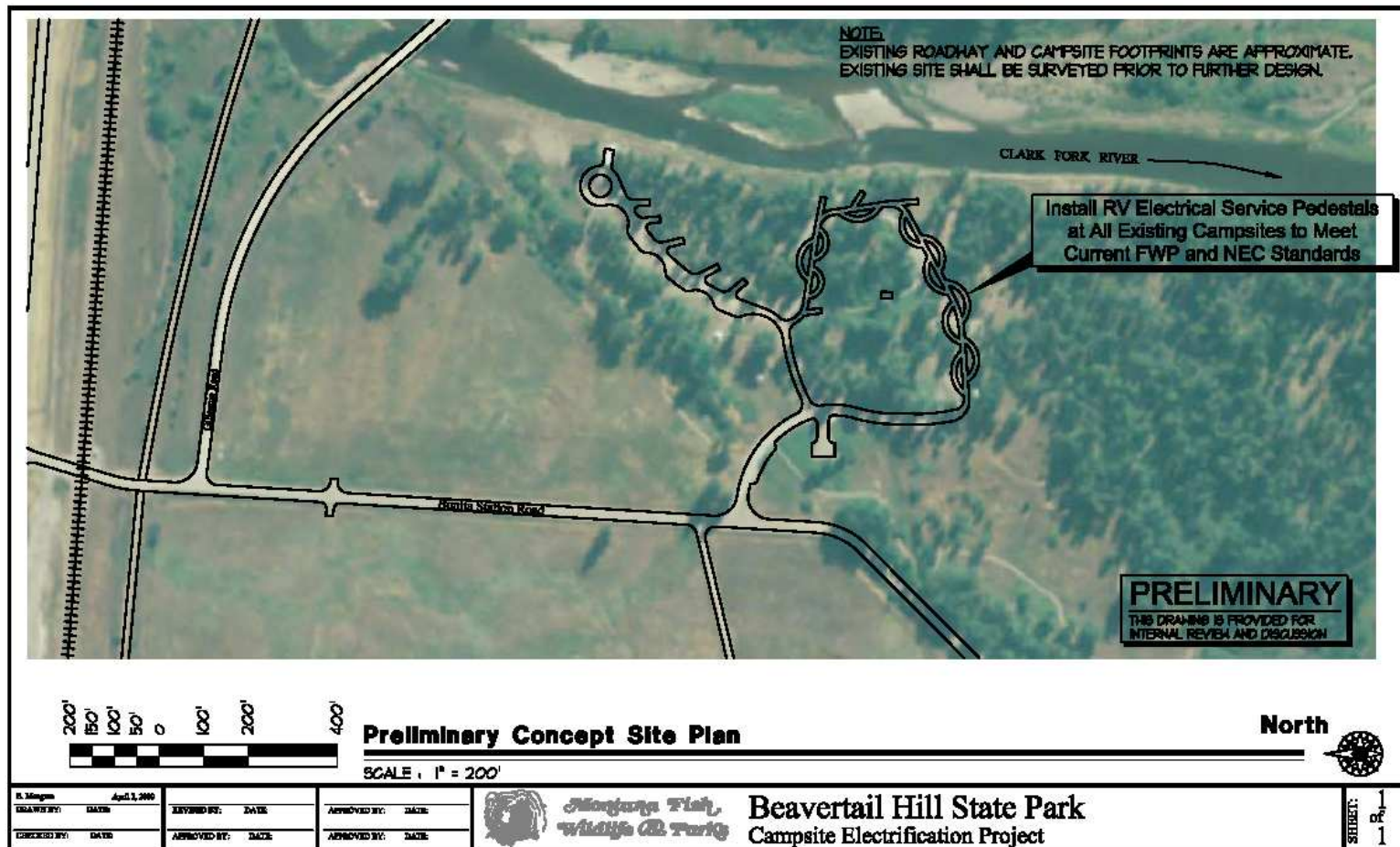
Beavertail Hill State Park Map



The camping sites are located along the interior loop road and the road that accessing the hand launch boat ramp.

APPENDIX B

Preliminary Electrical Concept Plan for Preferred Alternative



APPENDIX C

Tourism Report MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Beavertail Hill State Park Campground Electrification

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to install campsite electrical hookups at 28 campsites at Beavertail Hill State Park.

Beavertail Hill State Park is approximately 25 miles east of the Missoula, Montana, just south of Interstate 90. Beavertail Hill State Park provides visitors with a full range of facilities including: a hand launch ramp to the Clarks Fork River, a campground loop with 28 camp sites, two tipis for rent, amphitheater, picnic area, and interpretive trail. In 2008, approximately 35% of the campground users came from nonresidents off I-90 and is often frequented by Good Sam club members.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve the quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities.

Signature Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager Date April 20, 2009

APPENDIX D

HB495 PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date Feb 29, 2009

Person Reviewing Rebecca Cooper

Project Location: Missoula County, Section 1, T11N, R16W. The site is 25 miles east of Missoula, Montana.

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to install 28 campsite electrical pedestals at Beavertail Hill State Park. Additionally, the proposed project will require electrical infrastructure improvements, such as a new transformer box and electrical panel, to support the new pedestals.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- ☐ A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: *The exact amount of soil that will be disturbed is unknown but is expected to be much less than 20 cubic yards.*
- ☐ D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: *No, all new electrical lines would be buried.*
- ☐ I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: *No*

- [] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern;
including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: *No*

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.